

'Duty to provide information'

The Dunn Affair

The Foreign Affairs Division of the Parliamentary Library, Canberra, hit the headlines in the daily press last week when it was announced that Jim Dunn, the Head of the Division, had been transferred for 'political reasons'.

The Parliamentary Library is a vital source of information for MPs and possibly the only assured source of objective information that MPs have.

During the week, various newspapers reported that 'Last month Mr Dunn was involved in the unauthorised briefing of the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Hayden, on selected material from the Office of the National Assessments on the Russian invasion of Afghanistan'.

Mr Dunn is a recognised expert on Russia and also served as consul in East Timor.

Accusations

Canberra ran true to form and accusations were running thick and fast over the transfer of Mr Dunn.

Mr Hayden accused the Prime Minister, Mr Fraser, of inspiring the transfer of Mr Dunn as an act of 'political malice'.

The Administrative and Clerical Officers' Association, the largest public service union, accused the government of conducting a 'systematic witch hunt', and

Sir Billy Snedden, Speaker of the House of Representatives, who, along with the President of the Senate, is responsible for the Library, said Mr Dunn's attitudes on East Timor and the briefing on Afghanistan had been 'elements' in the move.

Mr Dunn has said that he was 'astonished' at the move and the comments from Sir Billy, and has said he will seek the retraction of Sir Billy's statements made on the ABC program AM.

Danger

Intrigue and mud-slinging are behind many stories which emanate from Canberra. The alarming fact which has emerged from this one is not whether Mr Dunn has been transferred for 'political reasons' but whether material obtained by the Library's staff is available only to the Government.

This must be a matter of deepest concern to all librarians whose philosophy and practice dictate that information provided by a library is available to all who request it.

The dangerous implication that information in the Library is available only to the Government and not to the Opposition is a



Jim Dunn . . . back to work

Photograph: News Ltd

serious matter and one of vital concern to all Australians.

On 13 April the Library Association of Australia released the following Press statement:

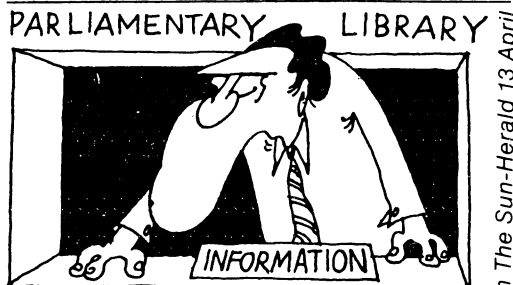
'The transfer of Mr Jim Dunn from his position in the Legislative Research Service of the Parliamentary Library to special duties was criticised today by the Library Association of Australia.

'The Association's Executive Director, Mr Gordon Bower, said that the Association was concerned because it appeared that Mr Dunn had been transferred when he had provided, in good faith, a report for a user of the library, which was based on the best available information.

'The fact that the information was used to criticise the present government was immaterial, Mr Bower said. Library staff had a duty to provide information to any user of the library, irrespective of political persuasion.

'It was vital that the Parliamentary Library continue to serve all Members impartially, and Mr Bower called on the Speaker of the House, Sir Billy Snedden to give an assurance that library staff are free to fulfil this obligation.'

On 15 April it was reported in the Press that Mr Dunn would not be transferred from his position.



Emmie 13-4-80

SOUNDS OF OUR PAST DIMINISH

The failure of Australia to effectively preserve her history through the medium of sound recordings will be a major issue to be discussed in Canberra at a conference of Sound Archivists to be held on May 10 and 11 at the Australian National University.

'Less than five percent of LP discs made in Australia today are being preserved for the benefit of future generations' claims Peter Burgis, spokesperson for the Australian Branch of the International Association of Sound Archives who are organising the conference.

Mr Burgis says that 'The bulk of sound recordings in institutional collections are inaccessible, uncatalogued and seldom available for listening, broadcasting or copying.

'At Parliament House in Canberra the voices of our Federal politicians are erased from tapes of the daily proceedings of both houses with little thought being directed to their potential as documents of historical value. Consequently some of the great speeches of Parliament no longer exist when they once did'.

Mr Burgis adds that 'The failure to plan the documentation of our sound history will result in our children inheriting an incomplete and distorted view of the past'.

Represented at the IASA Conference will be delegates from the broadcasting industry (public, ABC and commercial radio), television stations, record companies, media production companies, hi-fi and tape manufacturing groups, educationists, librarians, historians and private record collectors.

If you would like to know more about the conference contact Peter Burgis, c/o Music and Sound Recordings Section, National Library of Australia, Canberra, ACT 2600. (062) 621 513.

Money available

Are you aware that the NSW Board of Adult Education gets around \$3 million each year to spend, predominately on non-certificated continuing education?

The latest issue of the Board's newsletter says that the Board has 'funds available to assist voluntary adult education organisations in: the subsidy of the cost of conducting courses for adults; assistance with the employment of part-time organisers of community adult education centres; training of adult educators.'

The Newsletter goes on to say: 'Funds are not normally provided for equipment. Current priorities in funding are for disadvantaged groups and to present adult education programs by radio'.

Taken, in part, from Horan Wall & Walker Notes, 11/80. HWW Notes are always a 'fund' of information. They're published every week and cost \$75 per year. Available from Stephen Wall, PO Box 8, Surry Hills, NSW (02) 33 6693.